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Director of
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National Intelligence Daily (Cable)

21 December 1978

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ETHIOPIA-SUDAN: Guerrillas Meet

According to Sudan's official news agency, the leaders of the three major Eritrean guerrilla factions are meeting in Khartoum, and the frequently postponed summit meeting between Sudanese President Numayri and Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu will be held under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity within the next few weeks in Sierra Leone or Nigeria. In addition to discussing steps to improve bilateral relations, the two leaders are likely to focus on measures to negotiate a settlement of the conflict in Eritrea.

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The press announcement suggests that Sudan hopes that it can persuade the Eritrean leaders to forge a unified negotiating front during their meeting. Despite this optimism, the insurgents remain as divided as ever, and warfare between them continues.

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If the Numayri-Mengistu summit materializes, neither side will be likely to make early compromises sufficient to resolve longstanding tensions.

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BRIEFS

Israel-Lebanon

Israeli aircraft attacked several Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon yesterday. The Israelis announced that the attacks were in retaliation for 14 terrorist acts in Israel during the last six weeks.

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This is the first time since early August that Israeli aircraft have struck targets in Lebanon. The air-strikes are in line with Israeli policy to act firmly to meet Palestinian attacks in Israel.

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Lebanon

Lebanese Army Commander Victor Khoury was named Defense Minister yesterday, replacing Fuad Butrus. The change is probably designed to bolster the government's efforts to rebuild the Army into an effective security force. Khoury will retain his military command and is thus in a stronger position to carry through his plans for Army reorganization. He is a Maronite but is generally respected by Muslims for his honesty and his efforts to increase Muslim representation in the Maronite-dominated Army.

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Butrus is now free to devote more time to his duties as Foreign Minister. His dissatisfaction with a government-sponsored bill that reduces the power of the Army commander probably played a role in his resignation. Differences over this bill and other issues had produced friction between him and Prime Minister Huss.

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